

USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agricultural Information Network

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POLICY

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Report Highlights:

News on developments in agriculture and food in Egypt.

Nile Nuggets

*News on Developments in Agriculture and Food in Egypt
March 2016*

EGYPT REPLACES AGRICULTURAL QUARANTINE HEAD: On March 5, 2016, Minister of Agriculture and Land Reclamation (MALR), Dr. Essam Fayed, removed the head of the Plant Quarantine Office, Dr. Saad Mousa, and appointed Dr. Ibrahim Imbaby as his successor. A statement released by the ministry said that the decision was part of restructuring process for several departments at the ministry and was unrelated to a lingering dispute concerning the wheat fungus, ergot. Egypt, the world's largest wheat importer, faced anger from traders following the rejection of a series of wheat shipments by the quarantine office for having traces of a common grain fungus, ergot. The decision raised concerns over the country's tough new quality rules and caused suppliers to avoid international tenders issued by the state grain buyer. Egypt's quarantine office applied zero tolerance for ergot on those shipments while the Egyptian wheat standard complies with the Codex standard and allows up to 0.05 percent.

FAO EXPERT IN EGYPT WORKING ON ERGOT REGULATION POLICY: based on a request from Egypt's MALR, on March 13, 2016, a U.N. Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO) expert arrived in Cairo to being a consultation on the effect of ergot found in wheat and to reassess Egyptian policy in terms of this fungus and put in perspective the risk of this it poses to the world's biggest wheat importer. The FAO expert will participate in a workshop aimed at producing new legislation alongside a newly-formed committee tasked with assessing the risks of ergot, according to the agriculture ministry. The committee includes four representatives from the MALR and other representatives from different government institutions.

EGYPT DEVALUES POUND AS ANTICIPATED: On March 14, 2016, Egypt's Central Bank devalued the pound and said it would move to a more flexible exchange rate policy in an effort to rebalance markets and ease a foreign exchange shortage that had stifled business activity and hit confidence. The bank devalued the pound from LE 7.73 per U.S. dollar to 8.85 and simultaneously pumped nearly \$200 million into the dollar-starved banking system in a surprise auctioning of USD. The decision came after the gap between the official and black market rates widened to unprecedented levels. Since this devaluation, black market rates have surpassed \$1 = 10 LE.

DID YOU KNOW?: THE FIRST WINE LABEL WAS INVENTED IN EGYPT: According to a report published on vinepair.com, the first wine label was invented in Egypt. From 1550 to 1070 BC Egypt dominated the wine trade. While wine did not originally exist in the region, it made its way to Egypt via trade, and the Egyptians wholeheartedly embraced and improved it. They first introduced standardized amphorae or jars to make the transportation of the wine easier, creating seals of reeds and clay that protected the wine as it traveled across the world. But with so much collecting and trading of wine, there was a small problem: no one knew exactly what wine was inside each amphora, so a labeling system was adopted. The system was incredibly specific; recording the year the wine was made, where it was made, who made it, and even the style of the wine. All of this information was imprinted on the clay jars as they dried. On top of these essential facts, the Egyptians would often include notes on the amphorae that included how much wine was inside and whether the wine was good, great or excellent – basically creating the first wine ratings. Currently, for religious reasons as stated by the government,

Egypt applies 3000 percent import tariffs on alcoholic beverages.

HAWAWSHI: is a famous traditional Egyptian dish very similar to the Middle Eastern pizza-like Lahmacun. It is a meat minced and spiced with onions, pepper, parsley and sometimes hot peppers or chilies. The ingredients are placed between two circular layers of dough, and then baked in an oven. Hawawshi is commonly made in Egyptian homes and is also served in some restaurants, usually as a take-away.



Egyptians usually use the Egyptian Bread - 'Aish baladi' - Egyptian Local Bread for hawawshi. This bread is round, 15-20 centimeters in diameter and 1-2 centimeters thick, and is backed with whole wheat. There are two types of 'Aish baladi' - Egyptian Local Bread – the machine-made and hand-made.

Agricultural Crops

- **2.255 million hectare is the total area planted with winter crops:** An official report released in March 2016 by Ministry of Agriculture and Land Reclamation said that the total area planted with winter crops for 2015/2016 season reached 2.255 million hectare. Area planted with wheat is 1.435 million ha, barely 66,963 ha, lentil 0,763 ha, garlic 11,732 ha, onion 61,403, flax 5,156 ha, clover “alfalfa” 634,158 ha and broad or fava beans 38,957 ha.